

Message Text

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ACTION DPW-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 DHA-02 SCA-01 SCS-03 /086 W

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R 301008Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4038

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONGEN HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

DIA WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU

JCRC BARBERS PT HAWAII

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 27193

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CASC, VN

SUBJECT: AMERICANS IN VIET-NAM: ARLO GAY

REF: (A) STATE 240289 (B) BANGKOK 26332

SUMMARY: THE EMBASSY REPORTS FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT ARLO GAY'S IMPRISONMENT AND ESCAPE IN NORTHERN VIET-NAM. END SUMMARY.

1. ARLO GAY HAS PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS RAISED REF A. FIRST, CONCERNING HIS ESCAPE IN THE NORTH, HE PLANNED IT CAREFULLY OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME, SAVING FOOD, MATCHES, AND OTHER ITEMS TO CARRY WITH HIM. WHILE ON THE TRAIL, HE SUPPLEMENTED HIS DIET WITH MANIOC, WHICH HE ATE RAW OR COOKED, DEPENDING UPON SURROUNDINGS. DURING HIS
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TWENTY-SIX DAYS OF FREEDOM, HE WALKED ESSENTIALLY SOUTH-

WARD ALONG THE BLACK RIVER FROM HIS CAMP WEST OF SON TAY, TOWARD HOA BINH, AFTER WHICH HE WAS INTENDING TO HEAD WEST.

2. TO ELUDE CAPTURE, GAY TRAVELLED MOSTLY AT NIGHT. WHEN THERE WAS NO MOONLIGHT, HE WALKED IN EARLY MORNING. GAY FOLLOWED TRAILS, OFF WHICH HE HID WHEN SOMEONE WAS COMING, WHICH HE SAID OCCURRED FREQUENTLY. HE KNOWS HE WAS SPOTTED EITHER TWO OR THREE TIMES BUT IS NOT AWARE THAT HE WAS REPORTED, BELIEVING THAT THOSE WHO SAW HIM HAD NO WAY OF CONTACTING AUTHORITIES EASILY. AS DEPARTMENT NOTED CORRECTLY, GAY DOES NOT LOOK AT ALL VIETNAMESE, BUT HE IS A MAN WITH COURAGE AND PERSEVERENCE, HAVING SPENT EARLIER YEARS OF HIS LIFE IN RUGGED CONDITIONS IN ALASKA. HE GAVE UP HIS ATTEMPT TO WALK OUT OF VIET-NAM AFTER ALMOST A MONTH BECAUSE THE HILLS SEEMED TO BECOME HOPELESSLY HIGHER AND HIGHTER, AND ANTS HAD EATEN SKIN OFF HIS FEET WHEN HE SLEPT WITHOUT SHOES, CREATING A PAINFUL CONDITION. GAY SAID THAT, NOW THAT HE HAS SEEN A TOPOGRAPHIC MAP OF VIET-NAM AND LAOS AND THAT HE KNOWS THE COMMUNISTS HAVE TAKEN CONTROL OF LAOS, HE REALIZED HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL HAD HE CONTINUED HIS WALK.

3. NEXT, WITH RESPECT TO HIS BEARD, GAY GREW IT IN THE SOUTH BECAUSE THERE WERE NO RAZOR BLADES, CUT IT OFF IN THE NORTH SOMETIME AFTER ARRIVAL, THEN LET IT GROW OUT AGAIN. HE RETAINS HIS BEARD. GAY WAS PHOTOGRAPHED ON APPROXIMATELY OCTOBER 10 AND 12, BOTH TIMES BEARDED. INDEED, HE SAW HIS PICTURE THREE TIMES ON HIS WAY BACK TO PRISON AFTER SURRENDERING TO THE MUONG VILLAGE. HE WAS PICKED UP THERE BY TWO ROUGH NVA WITH A MOTORCYCLE HAVING A SIDECAR, SOME HOURS AFTER HE TURNED HIMSELF IN ON AUGUST 5. RIDING THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT, HE AND HIS CAPTORS ARRIVED AT 8:00 A.M. THE FOLLOWING DAY AT WHAT APPEARED TO BE A MENTAL INSTITUTION WITH ABOUT 100 INMATES. THERE, A CADRE PULLED GAY'S PICTURE OUT OF HIS POCKET AND SHOWED IT TO HIM. HE CONTINUED HIS JOURNEY IN A JEEP AND WAS SHOWN HIS PICTURE DURING STOPS IN TWO SUCCESSIVE PLACES. IT IS OBVIOUS FROM THE ACCOUNT THAT THE VIETNAMESE SPREAD HIS PHOTOGRAPH WIDELY THROUGHOUT THE AREA IN THEIR EFFORTS TO RECAPTURE HIM.

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4. THERE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT WHERE GAY WAS HELD IN THE NORTH. AS REPORTED REF B, HE WAS IN A PRISON CAMP THIRTY KILOMETERS FROM SON TAY RATHER THAN AT SON TAY (WHERE HE WAS TAKEN ONCE, FOR DENTAL CARE) ITSELF, AS DEPARTMENT STATED REF A. JCRC OFFICERS BELIEVE HIS CAMP WAS "BRIARPATCH". THEREFORE, GAY WAS NOT AT SAME FACILITY AS THE BAN ME THUOT GROUP, SO FAR AS WE CAN

DETERMINE, AND NEVER HEARD OF THOSE 14 PERSONS OR OF THEIR RELEASE. ALTHOUGH HIS CAPTORS DID NOT GIVE HIM A SET OF CLOTHING (ONLY SHOES) WHILE IN THE NORTH, HE SUSPECTS THE EXTRA SET OF CLOTHING THE 14 OBSERVED MAY HAVE BEEN INTENDED FOR HIM. SINCE THE BAN ME THUOT GROUP WAS PHOTOGRAPHED ON APPROXIMATELY OCTOBER 13 AND HE AT ABOUT THE SAME PERIOD, WE WOULD THINK THE SAME PERSON PHOTOGRAPHED THE 14 AND HIM, EVEN IF THEY WERE IN SEPARATE BUT NEARBY CAMPS, BECAUSE OF THE CLOSENESS OF THE DATES, NEITHER OF WHICH IS EXACT.

5. GAY INTENDS TO TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON AREA WHEN CONSULAR PROCESSING IS COMPLETED IN BANGKOK, AND HE IS QUITE AGREEABLE TO MEETING WITH DEPTOFFS AND STAFF OF SELECT COMMITTEE. HE IS AN INTELLIGENT AND MOST COOPERATIVE INDIVIDUAL. EMBASSY WILL ADVISE WHEN TRAVEL PLANS FIRM.
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